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27 April 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Breakfast Meeting at the White House - 22 April 1964

ATTENDED BY: The President, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Mr. McCone, Mr. Bundy, Senators Mansfield, Humphrey, Dirksen, Kuchel, Speaker McCormack, Boggs, Halleck, Arends, and one or two others

1. The President spoke at some length on the South Vietnamese policies, reading a letter of President Eisenhower to presumably Diem in October, 1954, indicating present policy was identical with that outlined by Eisenhower. There was some criticism on the part of Halleck, Dirksen and several other Senators because of complaints received from their constituents and American guests. The President then spoke of the proposed cutback in the special nuclear materials and turned the meeting over to Rusk who then reported on his trip as follows:

2. Rusk summarized the SEATO meeting, emphasizing unanimity with the exception of France's dissention and the communique which condemned North Vietnam for their aggression. He felt the SEATO meeting had gone very well, that France would not withdraw from SEATO. Rusk then described in detail his impressions of South Vietnam, his confidence in Khanh, his feeling that the tide had turned, and that he was confident that actions taken by Khanh since the McNamara visit are now being felt and we could expect better news in the future. He spoke briefly of the Laotian situation. He did not touch on his talks with Chiang Kai-shek.

3. McNamara then described in detail the cutback in special nuclear materials, referring to the charts which he has used right along, pointing out that even with the cutbacks we still had a very substantial quantity in excess of all requirements, including requirements for weapons yet to be developed or in fact yet to be programmed.

4. I was asked by the President to discuss Khrushchev's announcement of his cutback. I started out by saying that the Soviets' nuclear program was now in the same condition ours was in the first half of the 50's when we were substantially expanding our facilities. I said that facilities under construction, both reactors and U-235 plants, would increase the productive capacity between 60% and 70% and that these facilities would all be operational by mid-1968. When they are operational, the Soviet production of U-235 and plutonium would be about 75% of the maximum U.S. capacity. (I did not mention the present U.S. operating rates).

I then said that we believe the plutonium reactors that Khrushchev is going to stop construction of were being built at Tomsk; we know a good deal about them, and that that would reduce their potential plutonium production so that their maximum capacity would be about 80% or 85% of the capacity expected if the two reactors were completed. Said it was difficult to understand exactly what Khrushchev meant by the cutback of U-235. It would be highly desirable if he would stop construction of some of the new plants or plant expansions; however, this was not indicated. I said that once the plants were built, it was impossible for us to determine except in rare instances whether they are operating at total capacity, partial capacity, or shut down. We can, however, determine the progress of construction. I indicated that if the Soviets completed their plants and operated them at expected capacity their production would be substantially greater than U.S. production under our program of curtailment. There was no comment on my remarks.

After the meeting I explained to Bundy and McNamara the dilemma I was in in attempting to say with any assurance what Khrushchev meant by his April 21st statement. I pointed out from the production schedules where he would be as compared with our program. McNamara dismissed the argument on the basis that our stockpile or inventory would be far greater than the Soviets'; therefore the fact that they were producing more each year than we were was unimportant. I told McNamara and Bundy that while this was all true, and I did not disagree with it, I felt we would face some pretty severe questioning from the Joint Committee. Bundy retorted that the Chairman of the Joint Committee was in agreement and that Anderson had likewise indicated his agreement.

Bundy, McNamara and I then turned to the question of briefing of Presidential candidates, the subject covered in a separate memorandum.

I then told Bundy that I was highly dissatisfied over the fact that President Johnson did not get direct intelligence briefings from me as was the custom with President Kennedy and had been the Eisenhower custom in the prior Administration. Bundy recognized this and thought that I should discuss it directly with the President upon my return and use my report on my discussion with General Eisenhower as an excuse and a good opportunity to bring up the subject.

JAM/mfb (tape)